

This publication was developed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to assist in the planning and development of Neighborhood Networks centers.

The guides in this series offer "how to" information on starting up a center, creating programs and identifying center partners; center and program profiles and a wealth of resources.

Neighborhood Networks is a community-based initiative established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 1995. Since then, hundreds of centers have opened throughout the United States. These centers provide residents of HUD-assisted and/or -insured properties with programs, activities and training promoting economic self-sufficiency. These guides contain examples of successful center initiatives and how you can replicate them.

To receive copies of this publication or any others in the series, contact:

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
Neighborhood Networks  
9300 Lee Highway  
Fairfax, VA 22031-1207

Neighborhood Networks Information Center  
Toll-free (888) 312-2743  
TTY: (703) 934-3230

All publications are available from the Neighborhood Networks website at:

[www.neighborhoodnetworks.org](http://www.neighborhoodnetworks.org)



**MEDIA RELATIONS GUIDE FOR  
NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORKS  
GRAND OPENINGS**

**JUNE 1999**



# *Neighborhood* **Networks**

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

To create vibrant communities that foster life long learning and economic opportunity, primarily in HUD-assisted and/or -insured housing.

Dear Neighborhood Networks Staff:

Many of you have sought advice and assistance in increasing public awareness of your local Neighborhood Networks centers. It is my pleasure to introduce this *Media Relations Guide for Neighborhood Networks Grand Openings*.

We hope the information in this basic resource guide provides you with useful instruction on how to plan and conduct effective public information campaigns for Neighborhood Networks center grand openings. With this manual, we want to encourage Neighborhood Networks staff to become active participants in developing relationships with local media.

Nationwide, grand opening ceremonies for new Neighborhood Networks centers have generated significant electronic and print media coverage. I have seen first-hand the value positive media coverage can have in informing potential partners and community participants about the many resources and services provided by a Neighborhood Networks center.

This guide is divided into small sections that cover a wide range of areas you will need to address in planning an effective media campaign. It provides tips on how to write a news release, develop a media distribution list, get media attention and more. We have also provided you with many easy-to-follow examples that you and your staff can use.

Later, we may expand this basic instruction to include more comprehensive media relations guidance. Please feel free to provide comments and suggestions for future topics. Best of luck and I look forward to seeing many of you at future grand openings.

Best Regards,

Charles C. Famuliner  
National Field Director  
Neighborhood Networks  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

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# Importance of Holding a Grand Opening

## Section 1

### Why a Grand Opening Is a Great Marketing Outreach Tool for Attracting New Partners and Volunteers

Many of the successful Neighborhood Networks centers have held grand opening events. Grand openings are an effective way to create early marketing opportunities for your center.

The event and the media coverage it generates can play an important role in raising community awareness, which in turn can increase your center's ability to attract potential partners and volunteers.

A grand opening is also a great way to introduce your center and its many benefits and services to the community.

Active, productive Neighborhood Networks centers gain favorable community support and visibility that can help property owners lower vacancy rates by attracting new tenants. Property owners who support centers build lasting relationships with residents and community partners as well.

In addition, a grand opening gives you an opportunity to say thanks to the property owners, managers, partners and individuals who made your grand opening possible.

**News Really Does Travel Fast.** Through local print and broadcast media coverage, the news about your Neighborhood Networks center can reach thousands of people quickly. And results of good media coverage can go far.

In St. Louis, Detroit, Portland, Houston and many other cities nationwide, local media coverage has helped to increase local interest in partnership development with Neighborhood Networks centers.

#### Grand Opening Tip

Contact the Neighborhood Networks Information Center at 1-888-312-2743 to receive a Certificate of Achievement which can be presented during a grand opening event.

**Who Can You Reach?** Through media coverage and invitations to your grand opening event, you can gain many benefits and reach several important audiences, such as:

- ☐ **Community Decision-Makers.** Many decision-makers in the community -- who are great potential partners and advocates -- read the newspapers, watch the news and listen to the radio to stay informed of local events and issues.
- ☐ **Local Businesses Who Hire Trained Workers.** Many local businesses are eager to hire computer-trained employees and may be willing to provide customized training at your center.
- ☐ **Attracting Volunteers.** Holding a grand opening is also a great way to attract potential volunteers. Many local college interns and volunteers who may be interested in teaching computer classes often hear about opportunities through marketing outreach efforts. Other professionals in the community might be willing to share their talents -- but you have to get the word out.
- ☐ **Advantages for Senior-Oriented Centers.** For senior-oriented centers, grand opening media coverage can spark interest from local non-profits and businesses that may support your center. Many senior and youth groups, as well, are interested in working together in mentoring programs and might hear about your services through news coverage or marketing outreach.

Clearly, the payoff for conducting a grand opening is worth it.

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# Conducting Successful Grand Openings

## Section 2

### Easy Four-Step Process for Generating Media Coverage Through a Grand Opening: A Quick Review

Generating media coverage for your local grand opening is easier than you think. We have developed an easy four-step process that walks you through how to inform the media of a typical grand opening.

- ❑ **Step One.** Develop a media contact list that includes local radio, television and daily/weekly newspapers.

You don't need a complicated database or a media directory.

You just need some names and numbers of local media contacts and we'll show how to get them in **Section 6** on developing a good media distribution list.

#### Media Tip

Many newspapers, especially weeklies, have a calendar where you can highlight your grand opening date.

- ❑ **Step Two.** Prepare a media advisory or news release. Media advisories and news releases are valued by reporters who seek story ideas. We'll show you how to prepare media advisories and news releases in **Sections 7 and 8**.
- ❑ **Step Three.** Fax/mail your media advisory to your contacts on the distribution list. Sending a fax is the fastest, most effective way to send information to your contacts. We'll give you practical advice about how to best distribute your media advisories and news releases in **Section 9** on distributing the news release and media advisory.
- ❑ **Step Four.** Respond to any media inquiries about your Neighborhood Networks center or about the information you provided. We'll provide some practical advice on how to prepare for media interviews in **Section 10** on tips for working with reporters.

## Section 3

### Suggested Timeline for a Grand Opening Event

<b>THREE WEEKS BEFORE THE EVENT</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop event schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Arrange for podium, seating, decorations, etc. (See Section 4 on How Do I Plan a Grand Opening Event?)
<b>TWO TO THREE WEEKS BEFORE THE EVENT</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Confirm as many speakers as possible (See Section 4 on Working With Speakers)
<b>TEN TO TWELVE DAYS BEFORE THE EVENT</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Prepare or update your media list (See Section 6 on Developing a Good Media Distribution List)
<b>EIGHT TO NINE DAYS BEFORE THE EVENT</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Complete writing the media advisory (See Section 7 on Preparing the Media Advisory) <input type="checkbox"/> Begin writing the news release (See Section 8 on Preparing an Effective News Release)
<b>SIX OR SEVEN DAYS BEFORE THE EVENT</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Fax/mail media advisory (See Section 9 on Distributing the News Release and Media Advisory) <input type="checkbox"/> Call media to confirm receipt and pitch story if time permits (See Section 5 on How Do I Get Media Interested In Our Grand Opening.)
<b>TWO OR THREE DAYS BEFORE THE EVENT</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Complete and fax the news release <input type="checkbox"/> Call local Associated Press (AP) to put event on the daybook
<b>DAY OF EVENT</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Set up and hold event (set up can also be done the evening before the event) (See Section 4 on How Do I Plan a Grand Opening Event?) <input type="checkbox"/> Respond to media inquiries (See Section 10 on Tips for Working With Reporters) <input type="checkbox"/> Do follow-up calls to media if time permits (See Section 5 on How Do I Get Media Interested In Our Grand Opening Event?)
<b>POST-EVENT</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Monitor for media coverage (See Section 11 on Monitoring Your Media Coverage) <input type="checkbox"/> Respond to media inquiries (See Section 10 on Tips for Working With Reporters)



## Section 4

### How Do I Plan a Grand Opening Event?

A Neighborhood Networks center grand opening is similar to a store's grand opening: you want the community to know that you are open for business. One way to generate interest is to stage an event at your center. You can invite community members, local officials, business leaders and journalists. Planning a successful event is not complicated. You simply need time and a little creativity.

#### Setting a Date

It is important to consider two factors when deciding on a grand opening date:

1. **Be aware of possible date conflicts.** Make sure your event does not compete with media deadlines or other planned local or national news events that are more likely to grab media attention. You are more likely to attract media attention if you hold an event between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. weekdays. Evenings are not recommended unless you have a strong speaker or exciting news attraction.
2. **Allow time to prepare.** Like any event, a grand opening takes time to plan. Try to allow between three and four weeks before the event to prepare your program.

#### Media Tip

You might consider providing a refreshments table for the speakers, media and guests that attend your grand opening.

#### Media Tip

If you plan to hold part or all of your grand opening ceremony outside, remember to develop an alternative plan in case of bad weather.

- ❑ **Select high-profile speakers.** Consider inviting the mayor, local officials, HUD representatives, a sports figure, a celebrity, or a well-known community activist. Invite residents who have an interesting story to share. Don't forget important partners or other supporters of your center. To keep your program short and interesting, try to schedule no more than five or six speakers. A suggested time limit for a grand opening event is 30 to 45 minutes
- ❑ **Remember your audience's attention span.** Including between two and four speakers helps vary the program while keeping it short. It is best to keep speaker times to no more than 10 minutes each.

#### Arranging Important Details

- ❑ Develop an event schedule. The program agenda distributed at your grand opening should list speakers, topics and times.
- ❑ Make sure all names are spelled correctly and use people's titles.
- ❑ Try to get biographies of speakers and profiles of their organizations. Make arrangements in advance for a podium, microphones, seating, decorations and props, such as signs, banners, ribbons and scissors (for a ribbon-cutting ceremony).

**Most of all, have fun!** This is your chance to show the public and the media how your Neighborhood Networks center works with and for the community.

#### Working with Speakers

- ❑ **Invite speakers two to three weeks before the event.** After you set the grand opening date, you can begin inviting speakers by letter, telephone or in person. Try to confirm speakers' attendance at least two weeks before the event. You may need more time for high-level officials.

## Section 4A

### Checklist for Planning a Grand Opening Event

The checklist below provides a quick guide on the steps necessary to hold a successful grand opening. All the activities outlined are discussed in the manual.

#### ☐ Pick a good date

- See **Section 4** on How Do I Plan A Grand Opening Event?

#### Media Tip

Try to be realistic in your planning. Keep in mind your budget, time and your goals.

#### ☐ Reserve space for your event

- See **Section 4** on How Do I Plan a Grand Opening Event?

#### ☐ Secure a podium, seating, decorations

- See **Section 4** on How Do I Plan a Grand Opening Event?

#### ☐ Confirm as many speakers as possible

- See **Section 4** on How Do I Plan a Grand Opening Event?

#### ☐ Prepare a media list

- See **Section 6** on Developing a Good Media List

#### ☐ Write/distribute a media advisory

- See **Section 7** on Preparing a Media Advisory
- See **Section 9** on Distributing the News Release and Media Advisory

#### ☐ Write/distribute news release

- See **Section 8** on Preparing an Effective News Release
- See **Section 9** on Distributing the News Release and Media Advisory

#### ☐ Make follow-up calls to media if time permits

- See **Section 5** on How Do I Get Media Interested in Our Grand Opening Event?

#### Media Tip

Grand openings provide great photo opportunities. Bring your camera if you have one. You can send event photos to the local media.

#### ☐ Call the local Associated Press Daybook (AP) to put the event on the calendar

- See Media Tip in **Section 5** on How Do I Get Media Interested in Our Grand Opening Event?

#### ☐ Set up your event the day before

- See **Section 4** on How Do I Plan a Grand Opening Event?

#### ☐ Hold the event

- See **Section 4** on How Do I Plan a Grand Opening Event?

#### ☐ Respond to media inquiries

- See **Section 10** on Tips for Working with Reporters


#### ☐ Monitor your coverage

- See **Section 11** for Monitoring Your Media Coverage

## Section 5

### How Do I Get Media Interested in Our Grand Opening Event?

#### Sample Media Advisory



### MEDIA ADVISORY

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
Los Angeles Area Office  
441 West 54th Street  
Los Angeles, California

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**For Immediate Release:**  
March 17, 1998

**Contact:**  
Nancy Flores (000) 000-0000, ext. 0000  
Gloria Farias (000) 000-0000

**City's First Neighborhood Networks Center Offers Distance Learning  
HUD Welfare-to-Work Initiative Provides Computer Training, Economic Opportunity**

**What:** Grand Opening of the latest Neighborhood Networks Center at Pico Union in Los Angeles

**Where:** Pico Union Housing Authority  
1345 Tobeman Street  
Los Angeles, California

**When:** March 19 at 3 p.m.

**Who:** Margaret Sullivan, Southern California Representative for HUD  
Gloria Farias, executive director, Pico Union Housing Corporation

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LOS ANGELES — The city's first Neighborhood Networks center located at 1345 South Tobeman Street in Los Angeles will be linked to a two-way interactive system that will allow more than 1,000 residents at five Los Angeles housing communities to use job training/economic centers via distance learning.

The center is part of Neighborhood Networks, a community-based initiative launched by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that provides residents of HUD-assisted and -owned housing with on-site access to computer technology, resources and job training skills as a vehicle to self-sufficiency.

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Additional information is available on the HUD Neighborhood Networks website at [www.hud.gov/news/index.html](http://www.hud.gov/news/index.html) or by calling the Neighborhood Networks Information Center toll-free at 1-800-512-2741.

To generate media interest, you should communicate the news of your grand opening in a way that makes it newsworthy and interesting to reporters and readers, viewers or listeners they serve. Then identify the appropriate media contacts and ensure that they hear or read about your upcoming event.

Nothing is more important than the message that you are doing something worthwhile for the community. If the event is newsworthy, reporters will show interest.

**Basics.** It is best to send out both a media advisory and a news release. These are popular media relations tools that tell reporters all the essential background information: the **who, what, when, where and why?** Media advisories and news releases are discussed in more detail in **Sections 7 and 8.**


If you are pressed for time and must choose one communications tool, send at least the news release about two or three days before the event.

Both media advisories and news releases inform news organizations about your grand opening. However, it is important to understand the difference between a media advisory and a news release.

An advisory is an invitation or a "heads-up" for the media that you send no more than a week before your event. In contrast, a news release tells your story in greater detail and is sent after the media advisory. (See **Section 8** on Preparing an Effective News Release.)

Depending on the news of the day and conflicting deadlines, news organizations may decide not to attend your grand opening event. In that case, a news release provides reporters with context and detail to do a follow-up feature story. Many Neighborhood Networks stories are covered this way by both print and electronic media.

#### Sample News Release



### NEWS RELEASE

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
West Virginia Office  
405 Capitol Street, Suite 708  
Charleston, WV 25301-1795

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**For Immediate Release:**  
March 16, 1998

**Contact:**  
Robert V. Flynn, Jr. (000) 000-0000

**Neighborhood Networks Center to Open at Southmoor Hills Apartments  
HUD Welfare-to-Work Initiative Provides Computer Training, Online Opportunity**

SOUTH CHARLESTON, WV — Until now, many of the 600 housing residents at the Southmoor Hills Apartments never had daily access to computer job training and the information superhighway. But a new Neighborhood Networks center equipped with 10 computers will officially open Thursday, March 19, at 10 a.m., providing Southmoor Hills residents with on-site access to technology and economic opportunity.

Among the scheduled speakers at the grand opening are Robert Flynn, Jr. of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) West Virginia state office and Doug Jenkins, regional supervisor, First Martin Venture of West Virginia.

Located at 4992B Richard Drive in South Charleston, the center is one of more than 340 Neighborhood Networks centers that have opened nationwide. Two other West Virginia Neighborhood Networks centers are currently in operation at Vandalia Terrace Apartments in Charleston and Unity Terrace in Fairmont.

Launched by HUD in September 1995, Neighborhood Networks is a community-based initiative that provides residents of HUD-assisted and -owned housing with on-site access to computer technology, resources and job training skills as a vehicle to self-sufficiency. Neighborhood Networks centers nationwide offer housing residents a variety of resources such as computer training, Internet access, job readiness support, micro-enterprise development, GED certification, health care and social services, adult education classes and youth services.

—NANCY—

**Beyond the Basics.** If you have time, follow-up the distribution of press materials with phone calls. Sometimes press materials get lost or they are not directed to the right reporter or editor, especially in large news organizations. A phone call adds a personal touch, but be careful not to beg or demand that a journalist attend your event. In one or two minutes, try to sell or pitch your story to the editor/reporter.

**Media Tip**

One or two days before your event, call your local Associated Press Bureau to put your event on the daybook — a log which reporters read for potential news stories.

**Getting High-Profile Speakers.** Of course one of the best ways to make your event more interesting to reporters is to have high-profile speakers, such as local government officials, community stakeholders, key partners and celebrities. Reporters like to cover newsworthy personalities and officials.

# Working With Media

## Section 6

### Developing a Good Media Distribution List

If you want to get the best possible media turnout at your grand opening event, you should develop and maintain an updated media distribution list.

You can develop your own list, or you may contact your local HUD public affairs office or the Neighborhood Networks media relations/communications team, to see if a media list for your area is already available. (See **Sections 12 and 13** for more information.) If you develop your own media list, the process is simple.

- ☐ **First**, identify all the local media sources, including radio, cable and television stations, weekly and daily newspapers, magazines and wire services, such as *Associated Press* (AP) and *United Press International* (UPI). Not all areas have a local AP or UPI bureau.

Most towns and cities have at least one daily newspaper and three television stations, usually the ABC, NBC and CBS affiliates. Some cities and towns also have a FOX television station. Don't forget radio, cable, magazines and the weekly newspapers, which traditionally cover community events. Also remember all ethnic and religious media and public or community affairs programs that serve your local community.

- ☐ **Second**, check a telephone book or do a web search for a media list in your area. If you have access to the Internet, you can do a specific search for media organizations in your area. (For example, if you were in San Diego, using a typical web browser, you could type in San Diego

Media in the search box.) If a list is available, you can print it out directly from your web search. Once you have obtained local phone numbers for media outlets, you can start building your own list.

- ☐ **Third**, call the station and ask the receptionist at each media outlet to connect you with the news department. Then ask the news department to provide you with the name, phone/fax number and mailing address of the assignment editor/reporter for your area. You might want to introduce yourself to the editor/reporter while you are on the line.
- ☐ **Fourth**, type your contact information into your computer at the center. If possible, use a software program that prints mailing labels.
- ☐ **Finally**, update your mailing list. Since newsrooms constantly change, it is a good idea to update your media list at least every six months by making a quick round of phone calls. Add new names and contact information as needed.



Remember to make a separate mailing list that includes local officials, partners and community stakeholders. It is important to keep these groups abreast of the latest news about your center.

A partial sample of a media list for San Francisco is shown in Section 6A.

#### Media Tip

If you need to, check with the Neighborhood Networks communications team for help with a media list for your area. Call the team at (888) 312-2743.

#### Did you know in the U.S. there are:

- ☐ More than 1,550 daily and 9,600 weekly newspapers.
- ☐ About 1,550 television stations.
- ☐ About 4,500 AM and 4,500 FM radio stations.

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## Section 6A

### Sample Media List

#### Partial San Francisco Media List

##### Daily Newspapers

San Francisco Chronicle  
901 Mission Street  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
Contact: Richard Holding, Assignment Editor  
Telephone: 415-777-6050  
Fax: 415-543-2482

San Francisco Examiner  
110 Fifth Street  
San Francisco, CA 94103-2918  
Contact: Sharon Rosenhouse, Managing  
Editor  
Telephone: 415-777-2424  
Fax: 415-777-2525

##### Weekly Newspapers

San Francisco Independent  
1201 Evans Avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94124-1717  
Contact: Zoran Basisch, Managing Editor  
Telephone: 415-826-1100  
Fax: 415-826-5371

San Francisco Weekly  
425 Brannon Street  
San Francisco, CA 94107-1715  
Contact: Heather Weisner  
Telephone: 415-541-0700  
Fax: 415-777-1839

##### Wire Services

Associated Press  
P.O. Box 7247  
San Francisco, CA 94102-7247  
Contact: Mo Johnson, Assignment Editor  
Telephone: 415-621-7432  
Fax: 415-552-9430

##### Magazines

San Francisco Business Journal  
275 Battery, Suite 940  
San Francisco, CA 94111-3305  
Contact: Michael Consol, Editor  
Telephone: 415-984-2522  
Fax: 415-398-2494

##### Television Stations

KGO-TV (Channel 7) (ABC)  
900 N. Front Street  
San Francisco, CA 94111-1450  
Contact: Margaret Poindexter, Assignment  
Editor  
Telephone: 415-954-7777  
Fax: 415-956-6402

KPIX-TV (Channel 5) (CBS)  
855 Battery Street  
San Francisco, CA 94111-1503  
Contact: Al Corral, Assignment Editor  
Telephone: 415-362-5550  
Fax: 415-765-8994

##### Radio Stations

KABL AM/FM  
1025 Battery Street  
San Francisco, CA 94111-1201  
Contact: Mike Drive, News Director  
Telephone: 415-788-5225  
Fax: 415-788-9812

This is a sample media list only and does not  
include all news organizations for the San  
Francisco area.

## Section 7

### Preparing Your Media Advisory

As we learned in **Section 5**, the media advisory can be an effective tool to increase media attendance at your grand opening.

A media advisory is a brief overview that includes dates, times and scheduled speakers for an event. *See a sample on the next page.*

A media advisory should also pique a reporter's interest so that he or she will want to attend the event to find out more about your Neighborhood Networks center.

#### Media Tip

When HUD is issuing media advisories and news releases for grand openings, contact a local HUD public affairs representative who can provide expert guidance and assistance. See Section 13 for more guidance.

#### Media Advisories

Some key points to remember:

- ☐ Keep it simple, short. Media advisories are usually less than one page.

- ☐ Include one-line descriptions explaining **what** the event is about, **where** and **when** it will be held, **who** is involved and **why** you are holding the event.
- ☐ Add one or two brief paragraphs further explaining the **why** (background).
- ☐ Remember to write a headline and include contact information.
- ☐ Fax or mail the advisory to media six or seven days before the event.
- ☐ Include the HUD Neighborhood Networks website address at **[www.neighborhoodnetworks.org](http://www.neighborhoodnetworks.org)** or the Neighborhood Networks Information Center toll free number at 1-888-312-2743.

## Section 7a

### Sample Media Advisory



# MEDIA ADVISORY

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
Los Angeles Area Office  
611 West Sixth Street  
Los Angeles, California

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**For Immediate Release:**

March 17, 1998

**Contact:**

Nancy Flores (000) 000-0000, ext. 0000  
Gloria Farias (000) 000-0000

**City's First Neighborhood Networks Center Offers Distance Learning  
*HUD Welfare-to-Work Initiative Provides Computer Training, Economic Opportunity***

**What:** Grand Opening of the latest Neighborhood Networks Center at Pico Union in Los Angeles

**Where:** Pico Union Housing Authority  
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**When:** March 19 at 3 p.m.

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The center is part of Neighborhood Networks, a community-based initiative launched by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that provides residents of HUD-insured and -assisted housing with on-site access to computer technology, resources and job training skills as a vehicle to self-sufficiency.

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Additional information is available on the HUD Neighborhood Networks website at [www.hud.gov/nnw/nnwindex.html](http://www.hud.gov/nnw/nnwindex.html) or by calling the Neighborhood Networks Information Center toll-free at 888-312-2743.



## Section 8

### Preparing an Effective News Release

Sending a news release is the most cost-effective way to alert the media of a news event such as a grand opening. News releases should be typed or reproduced on standard-size paper, or you may use a news release template available on the Neighborhood Networks website. (See **Section 8A** for an actual sample of a news release.)

When writing a news release, it is important to answer five key questions about your grand opening event: **who, what, when, where** and **why**. Of course you don't have to answer all these questions at once. Try to keep your news release to no more than two, double-spaced typed pages. Your release should contain the following:

**Release Date.** This should appear preferably on the left-hand side of the release below the address and should contain the date on which you are releasing the information.

**For Immediate Release**

June 1, 1998

**Contact.** The contact(s) should appear on the right hand side of the release and should contain the person(s) whom you want reporters to call and a phone number. A news release issued by a HUD office should include a local HUD public affairs representative or Neighborhood Networks coordinator as a contact since they know about Neighborhood Networks and have experience working with media.

**Contact**

John Smith (301) 000-0000

**Dateline.** Datelines tell the media where your event will be held. A dateline should contain the city name, in **BOLD CAPITAL LETTERS**, where your grand opening will occur, followed in most cases by the state. No state is needed for major cities. States are abbreviated as such: **ND** for North Dakota; **MD** for Maryland; **CA** for California, etc.

**New Orleans**

Lead goes here

#### Write Headlines That Grab

The headline is the most important element of your news release. Your headline should grab the reporter's attention immediately. An ideal headline should summarize what your event is all about in less than 10 words and a maximum of two lines.

#### Subheads Help, Too

You may also write a subhead that supports the headline. The subhead allows you to provide additional information without going into great detail.

#### Sample Headline and Subhead

**City's First Neighborhood Networks Center to Open**  
*HUD Initiative Provides Lifelong Learning and Economic Opportunity*

#### Writing the Effective Lead

Your lead or first paragraph should summarize what your news release is all about in less than 30 words if possible. Keep your lead simple and try to use a unique news angle that sparks local interest.

#### The News Release Body

The rest of the news release, known as the "body," should include more detailed information. You also may use quotes to make your news release more colorful. Overall, your release should be clear, concise and informative. Use the active voice and attribute reports, statements and facts when necessary to add credibility.

To end your release, include an end paragraph sign (#). You may also want to include your center's website address, if you have one, or the HUD Neighborhood Networks website at **[www.neighborhoodnetworks.org](http://www.neighborhoodnetworks.org)**. Or list the Neighborhood Networks Information Center toll-free line: 1-888-312-2743.

## Section 8a

### Sample News Release



# NEWS RELEASE

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
West Virginia Office  
405 Capitol Street, Suite 708  
Charleston, WV 25301-1795

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**For Immediate Release:**

March 16, 1998

**Contact:**

Robert V. Flynt, Jr. (000) 000-0000

**Neighborhood Networks Center to Open at Southmoor Hills Apartments  
*HUD Welfare-to-Work Initiative Provides Computer Training, Online Opportunity***

SOUTH CHARLESTON, WV -- Until now, many of the 600 housing residents at the Southmoor Hills Apartments never had daily access to computer job training and the information superhighway. But a new Neighborhood Networks center equipped with 10 computers will officially open Thursday, March 19, at 10 a.m., providing Southmoor Hills residents with on-site access to technology and economic opportunity.

Among the scheduled speakers at the grand opening are Robert Flynt, Jr. of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) West Virginia state office and Doug Jenkins, regional supervisor, First Merit Venture of West Virginia.

Located at 4992B Richard Drive in South Charleston, the center is one of more than 340 Neighborhood Networks centers that have opened nationwide. Two other West Virginia Neighborhood Networks centers are currently in operation at Vandalia Terrace Apartments in Charleston and Unity Terrace in Fairmont.

Launched by HUD in September 1995, Neighborhood Networks is a community-based initiative that provides residents of HUD-insured and -assisted housing with on-site access to computer technology, resources and job training skills as a vehicle to self-sufficiency. Neighborhood Networks centers nationwide offer housing residents a variety of resources such as computer training, Internet access, job readiness support, microenterprise development, GED certification, health care and social services, adult education classes and youth services.

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At the Southmoor Hills Neighborhood Networks Center, residents will gain access to a wide range of services and programs, including basic computer skills such as word processing, spreadsheets and databases. The center also will offer job readiness training, job placement assistance, resume writing and financial management.

Because Neighborhood Networks receives only minimal federal funding and relies primarily on local support, centers develop strong partnerships with local businesses, nonprofits, educational institutions, faith-based organizations, foundations, hospitals and federal, county and state governments. First Merit Venture, the Church of Latter Day Saints, Service Office Supply, Staples Office Products, Fast Signs and CityNet Corporation are all key players in the development of the Neighborhood Networks center at Southmoor Hills Apartments.

"Our partners and the community are excited about the new center and the opportunities it will create," Flynt said. "Neighborhood Networks helps to close the computer technology gap and equips community residents with the tools and resources they need to compete in the new millennium."

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Additional information is available on the HUD Neighborhood Networks website at [www.hud.gov/nnw/nnwindex.html](http://www.hud.gov/nnw/nnwindex.html) or by calling the Neighborhood Networks Information Center toll-free at 1-888-312-2743.

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## Section 9

### Distributing the News Release and Media Advisory

Section 6 discussed how to develop a good media distribution list. Now we're going to put that media list to use.

#### Do I Fax or Mail?

Whether you fax or mail your news release is your own decision. Generally speaking, most news organizations still prefer to receive faxes.

However, an increasing number of large news organizations, such as *The New York Times*, no longer accept faxes unless they are requested by a direct contact of the newspaper. In addition, an increasing number of reporters are beginning to request news releases via e-mail. What you do depends on your available time and resources.

#### Media Tip

Most news organizations still prefer to receive faxes. If time permits, it is best to call your local media first to determine how to send materials.

- ☐ Fax or mail your media advisory six or seven days before the event.
- ☐ Fax or mail your news release about two or three days before the event.

#### Cover Sheets

If you fax your media materials, remember to include a cover sheet. It should include the contact name, title, news organization and fax number, along with a brief description of what you are faxing. This presents another opportunity for you to sell your story. Use a one-line sentence that highlights why an editor or reporter should attend your grand opening.

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## Section 10

### Tips for Working with Reporters

If you want to build good working relationships with reporters, there are some good basic principles you should practice:

- ❑ **Be responsive.** If reporters call, call them back, usually within one hour. Find out what reporters want and help them. Nothing irks reporters more than someone who ignores phone calls or is evasive.
- ❑ **Know the reporter's deadline.** Reporters work on deadlines and they frequently will ask for information on a tight schedule. Try to meet their deadline. Most daily newspapers have noon or 4 p.m. deadlines, while many television stations prefer to have news footage back by 3 p.m. for the 6 O' Clock News and 8 p.m. for the 11 O' Clock News. Some news segments can go live at anytime via satellite.
- ❑ **"Honesty is the best policy."** Shoot squarely with reporters. Be sincere and never lie. Present the facts and try to make them interesting.
- ❑ **Answer directly and follow-up.** If you don't know the answer to a question, don't make up one. Tell the reporter, "I don't know the answer to that question, but I'll find out and get back to you very soon."
- ❑ **Keep your demeanor with reporters professional.** Do not say or do anything negative in the presence of a reporter that could be picked up and used in the media. Never lose your cool or argue with a media representative. Treat a reporter as you would want to be treated yourself.
- ❑ **Briefing residents and others for interviews.** Reporters will often prefer to interview residents directly. Advise residents to relax and be themselves. Let their personality and experiences come out in the interview. Give some thought in advance to the questions that might be asked.
- ❑ **Keep your message simple.** Your comments to reporters should be brief, to the point and easily understood. Avoid long rambling answers. Have key talking points and messages ready.
- ❑ **Use anecdotes and success stories.** People love stories and they are more likely to remember them longer than mere facts. With a profile or success story, you can present a strong message. By telling a story, you will appear warmer and "down-to-earth."
- ❑ **Don't demand and never beg.** Respect the reporter's opinion and don't tell him or her what is or is not news. You can suggest a news story and its importance to the listening, viewing or reading audience, but don't push it. Don't complain about the treatment of a story, as long as it is accurate and fair.
- ❑ **Dress for success.** Whether on camera or speaking with a print journalist, you want to look your best. Experts advise their clients to wear low-key interview attire. Solid colors are best. Stress eye contact and have a relaxed but professional stature. Use your hands to stress particular points, but don't become too theatrical.
- ❑ **Stay in touch.** Once you have worked with a reporter, call them back occasionally. Keep the media informed about what is going on at your center. Develop a lasting relationship built on respect and professional courtesy. Periodic contact will also help you keep your story fresh on the reporter's mind.

## Section 11

### Monitoring Your Media Coverage

Remember that a main purpose of holding a grand opening event is to generate media coverage. Tracking how much, if any, media coverage you obtained is easy.

You can monitor media coverage on your own by watching the television news, reading newspapers and listening to the radio. For print stories, you may call the Neighborhood Networks media/communications team. The Neighborhood Networks toll-free number is 1-888-312-2743.

For a fee (usually \$20 to \$35), audio or video tape versions of media coverage can be ordered from local television or radio stations. Newspapers also will provide copies of past issues for the cost of the publication.

Ask Neighborhood Networks staff to program their VCRs to record the news on several television stations on the day of your event. This saves additional costs for ordering television footage from the station.

Use your press clippings and television coverage as tools to prepare marketing packets, increase awareness about your center, recruit partners and engage residents and community volunteers.

## Section 12

### Media Resources Available Through Neighborhood Networks



If you need to, check with the Neighborhood Networks media/communications team for help with a media list for your area. Contact the team at 1-888-312-2743.

Use the news release and media advisory samples that are included with the guide as guidance for preparing your own materials.

Please visit the Neighborhood Networks website at [www.neighborhoodnetworks.org](http://www.neighborhoodnetworks.org) for news release templates that you can use for your own media outreach.

Also, you can call the Neighborhood Networks Information Center at 1-888-312-2743 to obtain copies of fact sheets, success stories and other information about Neighborhood Networks from a national perspective.

## Section 13

### HUD Public Affairs Assistance

If you are with HUD and coordinating media for a Neighborhood Networks center grand opening, you should use your normal process of working with your local HUD public affairs representative.



## Section 14

### How to Reach the Neighborhood Networks Communications Team

When you have questions about your grand opening, please call the Neighborhood Networks media/communications team at 1-888-312-2743.

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